

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

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THEMES AND VARIATIONS.



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THEMES AND VARIATIONS

BY

MRS JAMES GLENNY WILSON
(*AUSTRAL*)

RANGITIKEI, NEW ZEALAND



GRIFFITH FARRAN OKEDEN & WELSH
(SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERRY AND HARRIS)
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PREFACE.



ALAS! for those who drag, with patient care,
The wave-worn trawling net of poesie!

Too often all their take is but a snare;

A salt fish, such as love-lost Antony
On Egypt's flood 'drew up with fervency;'—
While the dark Queen and all her maidens jeered,
And old Osiris laughed within his beard.

To you, chief poets of the elder times,

We have much to forgive! For still, I fear
You have cribbed all the fairest of our rhymes
Ere yet we waked to see the sunrise clear.

We slept, and yet we felt that you were near!
'Tis hard that we should have to bear the blame
Of that old theft—oh, might we also claim
Gifts of the silver bow, and ærial darts of flame!

And yet it may be that we sometimes glean

 In others' fields, although unconsciously ;

We are sleep-walkers, and our feet have been

 We know not where, beneath our mother sky.

Light moves his step, who walks the waving
 rye !

The moon is large,—the rustling harvest gleams,

Soft music stirs—wake not the fool of dreams !

Themes and Variations.



NEWS BY CABLE.

‘WHAT is the news from England?
Comes peace or war to-night?’
Eastward a dark cloud rises,
Westward a threatening light.
The danger-signal flashes,
The sailor shortens sail,
Our gallant ship of Empire
Is trembling to the gale.

‘But though the thunder mutters,
And sullen breakers form,
Our hearts are like the sea-gull
That dances in the storm!
Through burning noon, and midnight,
Through smoke and battle scars,
Through sun and fleeting shadow,
We are sailing to the stars!’

‘ Stranger !—That ragged ensign
By northern winds unrolled,
Is dipped in blood whose colour
Was never bought or sold.
The heart of England’s bravest
Still beats on the bending mast,
Still burns at the battle signal,
And rushes before the blast !’

From the iron-bound Crimea
Came this royal crimson stain ;
This from the palms of Lucknow,
This from Egyptian plain.
This from the wave-worn sailor,
This from the Christian seer,
This from the Austral desert,—
The blood of the pioneer.

And this, the heroic story
Of mother, maid, and wife,
Who gave to its hue of glory
All the dearest light of life.
So, wrapped in these faithful colours
And looking with hope on high,
Our England presses forward
To her immortality.

A COMPLAINT.

AH ! how is this ? When we were young
Time paid our daily wage in gold
Some silver coins—his mark a scythe—
He gives us now we're growing old.
And soon, alas ! our copper pence
Too scant'ly will be doled.

But, Time, I'll yet be even with thee,
Though thou art rich, and I am poor.
These shining coins of thine I'll change
For wheaten thought ; and honeyed store
Of music ; and for hopes divine—
Gems with the sparkle of another shore.

A S K E T C H.

A LITTLE house, o'erhung with flowers,
Where first the creamy primrose breaks,
Where roses tell the summer hours
With bursting buds and falling flakes.

A little garden, blossom-starred,
With jewelled fruit and honeyed bell,
With holly for its prickly guard,
And bee for humming sentinel.

A little stream that sings and frets,
And hurries onward to the main,
Who drinks of it, though worlds divide,
Will surely come and drink again.

THE LARK'S SONG.

THE morning is wild and dark,
The night-mist runs on the vale,
Bright Lucifer dies to a spark,
And the wind whistles up for a gale.
And stormy the day may be,
That breaks through its prison bars,
But it brings no regret to me,—
For I sing at the gate of the stars !

Along the dim ocean-verge
I see the ships labouring on,
They rise on the lifting surge
One moment,—and they are gone.
I see on the twilight plain
The flash of the flying cars ;
Men travail in joy or pain,—
But I sing at the gate of the stars !

I see the green, sleeping world,
The pastures all glazed with rime :
The smoke from the chimney curled :
I hear the faint church bells chime.
I see the grey mountain crest,
The slopes, and the forest-spars,
With the dying moon on their breast—
While I sing at the gate of the stars !

COMPENSATION.

FRET not that in thy dwelling-place
The street is silent, the field is bare,
Nor canst thou sail to shining lands,
Nor sleep where tropic trees are fair ;
For every night thy darkening window-bars
Are visited by the journeying host of stars.

Scorn not our nature's narrow bound,
An atom blown about in vain,—
One thought contains this azure round
And circles o'er the circling plain ;
Each trivial life that to the dust is lent,
Is garlanded by the unbounded firmament.

Mourn not our fading transient day ;
For over us a light will shine,
A vision of eternity
That makes one little hour divine.
Through this dim window we look out of doors,
On purple hills and plains and ever happy shores.

OF A LADY.

HER house is nearly in the town,
Yet shady branches round it lower ;
Her tea is always on the board
At half-past four.

Her fireside has a friendly look,
There's something happy in the air.
Her cream is such, you rarely now
Meet *any* where.

I like her eyes, I like her hair,
I like that pretty, simple dress
(Paris, and cost 500 francs
No penny less.)

Pardon my inconsiderate words,
I should not write on themes like these.
(Her shoes are neat ; you'd never think
They're No. 3's.)

She likes this shaded corner best,
The rosy lamp, the Dresden set,
A friend,—or two perhaps,—a waft
Of mignonette.

And some one touches, in the gloom,
The harp's mysterious wailing strings,
And thoughts that never spoke in words,
Take music's wings.

Dear friend, though tired and far away,
I still can seek your door in Spain,
Sit still beside your fire and drink
That tea again !

MIGNON'S SONG.

NEW WORLD.

KNOW'ST thou an island on the misty ocean,
Green, green with fern, and many an ancient tree,
Whose waving tops, with soft perpetual motion
Repeat the same primeval melody ?

The rata with the red pine interlaces,
And lights the forest with a scarlet gleam.
The sunshine on the hills the shadow chases ;
The fern-tree bends in silence o'er the stream.

I see the harvest slopes ; the village under ;
The rivulet lifts its music on the air.
Hearing far off the turbulent ocean-thunder,
It leaps in laughter down its rocky stair.

There is the snow-king's palace and dominion !
Unchanged in summer's glow and winter rain,
With frozen wings outspread, and icy pinion,
He floats above the level pastoral plain.

Motionless, voiceless, pallid, yet immortal !
While far below the cloudy seasons roll ;
Meeting the day, and night's slow-closing portal,
He reads the ever-changing starry scroll.

Oh there, beloved ! There if we might wander,
Leaving this world of noisy hopes and fears,
Drink of the fount of youth that rises yonder,
And all forget our shadow-laden years !

A MAORI LEGEND.

A LEGEND, my friend, they relate of these fire-guarded
mountains,
Three mountains that rise in the silent and untrodden
forest,
Forbidden to white foot, and held by the Maori thrice-
sacred.

One mountain, the greatest, arises in snow-sheeted
splendour,
Far seen, on the plains, like a white ship blown hither
and stranded,
From the ice-fields that gleam to the dance of the
southern Aurora ;
And one wears the veil of volcano ; and one looks a ruin.

In the ages far past came a chief from the isles of the
west wave
To see these wild peaks ; and with him came the slave,
Ngaru-hoé.
They sought to ascend, but the death-wind blew cold
from the glacier :
And the sleep of its breath overcame Ngaru-hoé, the
faithful.
Then the chief cried in anguish—‘ Oh, Sisters ! come
hither ! I perish ! ’

. . . . The sisters arose in their sun-lighted vales of
Hawaii—

Snatched fire from the altar, and flew o'er the ripples of
ocean.

They stumbled in haste, and the holy fire fell from their
fingers,

And burns to this day in wild geyser, or smouldering
volcano.

So they rescued the chief; and the fire to his bosom
returning,

Hand in hand they fled fast down the cliffs of the rushing
Waikato.

By the light of the peak, by the smoke of the red-burning
island,

Over ripple and reef, till they reached the hearth-stone of
Hawaii.

But no footstep returning awakens the slave, Ngaru-hoé.
So peaceful he sleeps in the shade of the thrice-smitten
mountain.

A VISION.

BUT yesterday I saw a ghost,—

The calm of noon-day was on the hills,
As we rode by the silent, sunny coast,

On threadbare grass, by the lessening rills.
Far down in the valley the corn-waves spread,
At the breath of the south wind they bowed and fled.

Fleeing before him, yet ever stayed,
Gold in the sunshine, grey in shade.
The smoke hung blue on the swampy plain

Yellow and sere was its reedy breast
Like the stripes of a tiger's brindled vest),
And the bulrushes rustled and sighed again ;

But the scent of sea-weed came sweet from the west,
Where we saw, in her crystal, sun-streaked home,
The blue wave flowering forever in foam.

Was it the spirit of youth I saw

Dancing alone on the lonely hills,
All made of sunshine, a fair outlaw ?

His coat was the colour of daffodils ;
In his hand was a flute, but I could not hear
Either flute or song, though I followed near ;
For so loudly the rivulets chimed that way,
Like bell-ringers ringing a holiday.

Was it a guest from a fairy shore

Ship-wrecked, lone, under cloudy skies?

I know not. He passed and I saw no more ;

But I fain still would follow those harmonies,

Still seek, through the smoke of the Autumn hills,

The gleam of that vesture of daffodils !

P E N S E E S.

I.

OUT of the deep, the endless coil of truth,
With wear, and fret, and toil of many hands,
Strains slowly to the surface ; while, in turn,
Each generation strives to lift the line
And read the secret of the fathomless sea.
Let us toil on ! Who knows, before we go,
What living thought may flash from those green depths
below ?

II.

Columbus, wandering by the Iberian shore,
Asked of the waves to aid him in his quest,
And if, beyond that tremulous silver floor,
They murmured round some kingdom of the west.

The breakers washed, in answer, to the land
Fragments of spicy wood, strange fruit, and shell,
And once a graven toy for childish hand,
A riddle for the sailor's wish to spell.

And we, who wander by the whispering bent,
In faith, and dream, and broken memory,
Seek for a sign of that far continent
That lies beyond Death's undiscovered sea.

TO LAURA.

IF you could sit beside me
In your gown of old brocade
(Dim primroses mixed with silver),
And your ruffles stiff and staid.

While the rainy cloud draws downward,
And the shadows fill the room ;
And the fire, our boon companion,
Laughs and dances in the gloom.

While the roof-tree creaks and quivers
With the wild autumnal gale,
And the staggering forest echoes
To the breakers' distant wail.

Then it sinks ; and low, and lower,
Steals a tender music in
(As it seems a phantom master
Playing on the violin).

In the pause we hear the fretting
Of the fallen lattice-vine,
And the poplar speaks in whispers
To the shuddering pine.

Then again the forest thunders !
And the seaward voices swell,
And the storm flings wide the portal
For some guest invisible.

When the silver lamp is lighted,
And your mother's picture there,
Looks and listens to our voices
With her fond protecting air.

Thus if we could sit together—
Ah, that dream may never be !
Come, wild equinoctial tempest,
I will wander forth with thee !

SONG OF THE BLIND GUEST.

LONG years ago, bright Phaeton sought, but vainly,
To drive the winged horses of the sky.
Great Zeus smote the hand which thus profanely
Wrought on our earth-fields drought and misery.

But here a mortal takes a magic token
And on the shining coursers lays his rein,
Patient they stand, those milk-white steeds unbroken,
Or fleetly bear along his burdened train.

The sunbeams from serene Apollo's stable
Lead us across the iron-ribbed lea.
Speak in their ears ! They thrill the singing cable,
Or pace the unquiet causeway of the sea.

Though now ye enter not my darksome prison,
To visit one who sits so lonely there,
I still can feel, bright spirits, ye have risen,
And touch the out-streaming meshes of your hair.

THE MUSICIAN.

‘STAY, lovely messenger ! one moment stay !
Nor deeper in that starry world retreat !
Stay, for the breaking day is fair and sweet,
And overhead the stars and sunlight meet ;
The flittermouse floats on her homeward way !
Oh, if though may’st !—one moment here delay !’

‘Stay, for I fain would know thy gentle name ;
Much would I ask, how much of thee would learn !
Lift to my lips thy crystal-bearing urn !
Or say, at least, thou wilt to earth return,—
That I may see thee in the sunrise flame
As once before, and know thee for the same !’

The bright-winged messenger no longer stayed,
Than in the fields the daisies’ dial-plate
Flashed to the opening day with silver state.
But from his bending urn, by heavenly fate,
Some drops fell on the child of earth who prayed.
Then on he moved, and joined the bright planet band,
Travelling far onward toward the Amaranth land.

THE POET.

SOMEHOW, Horatio, when you speak of him,
I seem to see him—in thought's pictured house,
Under a vaulted roof, with oak embossed,
The walls fair tapestried with history,
Doors opening wide before him, marble steps,
Three centuries' sunshine on his stately head,
Shakespeare, the Host of Time. . . .

But if you go
Back to the home and day wherein he dwelt,
And sitting with a neighbour,—next the fire,
A window westward, paned with scaly glass,
A bunch of filberts and a silver cup
Close to your hand,—then you might hear of him.
. . . 'Shakespeare of Avon? Oh yes, I know him
well,

Have known him since he was a babe in arms.
I like him well, though he is somewhat strange,
Not quite—you understand?—an absent soul.
At times he can be shrewder than the best,
But often as we talk, or on the road,
He pays no heed, sir, no, not to one word
That I am saying ! 'Tis his weakness, sure.
He falls within that pale moon-world of dreams
Whence come his merry days and tragedies.

He is the odd plate in a set of delft.
But yet, despite of all, I like him well.
And many an evening have I laughed and sighed
By turns, when he would read us from his book,
The Merry Wives, or that Midsummer Dream,
Or grim Macbeth, or the pale mourning Prince.
They say the play-house up in London town
Is often swarming like a hive of bees
When his play's on. And lords and ladies go
And cry with pleasure at his mummeries.

I do believe there's something yet in them
—Not like the solid works of former days—
But still a hook to catch an idle hour. . . .
And you have heard of him, have come from far
To see him? Think he is a genius too?
Well, well, who knows?—For genius—mark me, sir,
Is such a cuckoo that we never guess
Into what nest she lays her sea-blue egg.
But yet, for all that, I've a thought I'd know
A genius when I'd see one. Like enough
Our neighbour Brownus Alexandrius
Will yet be heard of in the eminent world.
He has a turn for writing,—tomes on tomes!
And oft I've heard him say he will be known
As the great poet of Elizabeth.
You should call in and see him on your way.
As for Will Shakespeare,—though I wish him well,
A kindly friend, a rare and welcome guest,
I will be bound you'll never hear of *him*
Striking a bargain with my Lady Fame,
I *may* be wrong, but,—Sir, the wine's with you.'

SUGGESTED BY

‘Du liebst mich nicht.’—GRAF PLATEN.

HE loves me not ! The hour is past for meeting ;
The daisy closes round our garden plot !
The fountain sends to earth its happy greeting,
But he—he loves me not !

He loves me not ! I’ve plucked three russet peaches,
Just ripened for him in our favourite spot.
But no one moves through all those shining beeches—
He loves, he loves me not !

He loves me not ! This rose-hued gown I’m wearing
He used to praise,—but now I’m all forgot.
My peace is gone, my hope’s past all repairing,
Alas ! he loves me not !

He loves me not ! But who comes up the valley ?
I hear his step—my pigeons leave the cote,—
Go, doubting Fiend ! Take to thy dreariest alley
That lie ! He loves me not !

THE SAILOR'S MOTHER.

MY heart is o'erflowing,
My foot treads the foam,
Go tell to the wide world
My son has come home
From the far-rolling north sea,
Where mermaidens cry,
Where the sun, all the week long,
Goes round in the sky,
Where the ice-cliffs break seaward
With thunder—loud fall,
From the pale northern dancers—
He comes from you all !

Go, seek in the oak-chest
The blue-flowered plate,
The bowl like an eggshell,
The cup's silver mate.
Lay on the round table
The damask so fine,
And cut the black cluster
Still left on the vine.
My hand shakes,—but bring me
That pure honeycomb,
Now nothing shall vex me,
My boy has come home !

Now twine on the doorway
Pale wreaths of jasmin,
And tell all the roses
His ship has come in.
How lucky my wheat-bread
Was baked yester night ;
He loves the brown home-loaf,
And this is so light.
Now heap up wild berries
As black as the sloe—
I never must tell him
I've wept for him so !

The girls will come running
To hear all the news,
The neighbours with nodding
And scraping of shoes.
The fiddler, the fifer,
Will play as they run,
The blind beggar, even,
Will welcome my son.
He smiles like his father
(I'll sit there and think),
Oh, could he but see us—
It makes my heart sink.
But what is that ?—' Mother !'
I heard someone call,
' Oh, Ronald, my first born !
You've come after all !'

A T E X T.

IN every land, in every age,
Wherever man's brief tenancy
Has left some stone, or graven page,
Or reed-writ history.
Though dark and sad, or growing clear,
This writing gleams upon the wall—
Some dream of faith, some hope of cheer,
Some heavenly call.
We see some river by whose crystal wave
The soul finds peace ;
Some high tribunal that decrees the slave
A long release.

Darkly, beyond our straining sight,
One planet wings its starry way.
No sparkle tells us of its wheeling flight,
No signal ray.
Yet o'er the untrodden deep of space
It sends a secret mystic call :
Its brethren hear, and each in measured place
Sway to its thrall.
Above the heaven's glittering poles,
Beyond the star-beam's fathom line,
Unseen, a spirit draws our souls
With power divine.

A SPRING AFTERNOON IN NEW ZEALAND.

WE rode in the shadowy place of pines,
The wind went whispering here and there
Like whispers in a house of prayer.
The sunshine stole in narrow lines,
And sweet was the resinous atmosphere,
The shrill cicada, far and near,
Piped on his high exultant third.
Summer ! Summer ! he seems to say—
Summer ! He knows no other word,
But trills on it the live-long day ;
The little hawker of the green,
Who calls his wares through all the solemn forest scene.

A shadowy land of deep repose !
Here where the loud nor'-wester blows,
How sweet, to soothe a trivial care,
The pine trees' ever-murmured prayer !
To shake the scented powder down
From stooping boughs that bar the way,
And see the vistas, golden brown,
Touch the blue heaven far away.
But on and upward still we ride
Whither the furze, and outlaw bold,
Scatters along the bare hillside,
Handfuls of free, uncounted gold,

And breaths of nutty, wild perfume,
Salute us from the flowering broom.
I love this narrow, sandy road,
That idly gads o'er hill and vale,
Twisting where once a rivulet flowed,
With as many turns as a gossip's tale.
I love this shaky, creaking bridge,
And the willow leaning from the ridge,
Shaped like some green fountain playing,
And the twinkling windows of the farm,
Just where the woodland throws an arm
To hear what the merry stream is saying.

Stop the horses for a moment, high upon the breezy
stair,
Looking over plain and upland, and the depth of summer
air,
Watch the cloud and shadow sailing o'er the forest's
sombre breast,
Misty capes and snow-cliffs glimmer on the ranges to the
west.
Hear the distant thunder rolling, surely 'tis the making
tide,
Swinging all the blue Pacific on the harbour's iron side.
Now the day grows grey and chill, but see, on yonder
wooded fold,
Between the clouds a ray of sunshine slips, and writes a
word in gold.

THE YOUNG RULER.

LUKE XVIII., MARK X., MATT. XVIII.

OFT in the Sabbath sunshine,
As I read in the Holy Word,
I turn to that brief description
Of the Ruler and Our Lord.

The Ruler was true and upright,
His hands unstained by sin,
His form was a brave translation
Of the noble soul within.

And One beholding him, loved him—
Alas, could such record be?
With the beam of heaven upon him,
He turned from its mystery.

Though the centuries roll between us,
Yet we stand by his side to-day.
Ours too is the eager question ;
And how sadly we turn away.

His name we know not, nor story ;
Yet dreaming, I see him stand
In the shade of his mountain cedars
Looking over the summer land.

When the white dawn stirred on the hill-tops ;
In the sleepless and sultry night,
Did he still hear that solemn answer ?
Still gaze on that heavenly light ?

Till the sun and the stars and the earth-fields
From his vision fled and failed,
And high in divinest radiance
Eternal love unveiled ?

We are all the same ; if the heavens
Were opening about our doors,
We would turn from their hills of harvest
Nor walk on those crystal shores.

Like beggars along the wayside
We ask, in our spirit-strife,
From each traveller riding onward,
' Good Master, Eternal life ! '

And the King goes by, and the Seer,
The Reader of Nature's lore,
The Robber of Truths, the Finder,
And they answer as we implore—

' We know not its price nor dwelling,
We see neither sign nor shape,
'Tis a dream, a desire, a legend,
The prisoner's vain escape.

' Nothing more '—yet our hearts deny it—
As they pass by,—in silence and pain.
We have waked to that music immortal—
We sleep not in peace again.

FRANZ SCHUBERT.

(Died 1828.)

[*'Schubert le musicien le plus poète qui fut jamais.'*

F. LISZT.]

How many a winter evening have we sped
With thee, dear Master ! When the southern blast
Bent all the treetops, like a flapping sail,
And on the hearth the woodfire ceaselessly
Cracked ; as when the furze on golden moors
Snaps its brown seed pods in the summer heat.

With thee we wander thro' the enchanted wood.
The rider presses onward, ever on,
The child clings closer to the father's arm,
And shudders at the phantom-crowned King.
And then we hear that unforgotten song,—
The Erl King, flitting through the dusty glade,
Singing wild snatches that must haunt the day
Of all who listen to its perilous tune.

Or by lone heath, or clear and rippling wave,
Or whom the hunter winds an airy horn,
Or with the shepherd lad whose rustic pipe
Laments the beauteous tenant of the glen.

'The rainbow fleets over her roof-tree,
Her face I no longer can see,
Move onward, ye sheep, then, move onward,—
Full sad your poor shepherd must be !'

Or gentle Marguerite, her hair unbound,
Sits spinning in the homely chimney-nook,
Singing so low and sweet of one she loves
When, ah !—the thread is broken and the dream !
And all the fairy music turns to tears.

Or by the stream we move in happier days,
The mill turns on, turns on, by night and day.
The Linden waves and beckons to the stars,
And sunny dreams play round the sleeper's head.

But most of all,—heart-broken ; yet divine—
We love the winter journey in the snow.
A winter journey, truly, was the way
To him, who gave this magic ring to men.
Too soon, too soon he reached the hostelry,
Where room was made for him among the graves.
Weary and poor, a solitary guest
He came, but slept in immortality.

And now his songs have floated through the world
And found new life, new friends in many lands,
Even here in this green island of the south,
Alien in race, far from his Styrian hills,
We mourn with him in fadeless melody.

Such music moves upon the verge of day.
The sorrow that will never be consoled,
The dream that may not be interpreted,
The tongue we understand but cannot speak,
The promptings of an unremembered past
Live in his song, and light our thoughts to-day.

A BED IN THE HILLS.

SURELY a pleasant place to rest

For this tired soul whose cares are over,
His head upon the mountain-breast,

His cover beaded white with clover.
From the green marsh and reedy pool

I hear the music of the moorland
In lonely cry, and whispering air
That shakes the rushes' tasselled garland.

Sometimes a bee goes droning by
On merchant's errand.

What was thy story? Didst thou love?

And was thy love a curse or blessing?
The reddest cup that Circe pours,
Or sacramental joy possessing?
Did'st ever build upon the cloud

A house of purple, vain romances?
Did'st ever know thy faith betrayed?
—The bitterest of life's bitter chances,
The first of all the deaths we meet
In chill advances.

Peace! peace! The summer breathes around,
Gold marsh cups bloom in every hollow,
The seeding thistle sheds her down,
And airy spears of hawkweed follow.

The quail starts from her hidden nest,
Where shaking-grass with fern embraces :
The mountains glide across the plain
And vanish into azure spaces.

Blue phantom-land ! May Eden yet
Be somewhere in those unknown places ?
The moorland spreads towards the west
Her purple waves and granite hoary ;
No dream, no hint of death disturbs
Sweet nature's story.

‘ And he who deeply slumbers here,’
—So speaks a voice, or I am dreaming—
Through all his sorrows, sin and fears,
Tasted of life and not its seeming.
He loved these plains, these morning hills,
He helped the fallen, sought his brother,
Gave and forgave ; repented oft,
Nor would have changed his life for other.
He laboured not for bread alone,
His thread of faith was never broken,
Sometimes, from far beyond the stars,
He seemed to hear a message spoken.
Oh gently take this clover bloom
And leave him to the fading even,
The rivulet's song, the visiting cloud,
The dew of heaven !

AT MUSIC.

OH, nightingale, singing alone on the tree,
What story is this that thou tellest to me?
Soothsayer, sing on ! For the morning must break,
And from dreams we awake.

A phantom flits yonder, along the green glade,
She glides o'er the moonshine, she slips through the
shade.

I hear her soft laughter, I catch her white train,
But she will not remain.

The pomegranate tree listens and rustles above,
The nightingale warbles her nocturne of love ;
'Tis the whisper of sleep, 'tis a balm for the heart,
'Tis a theme of Mozart !

IMITATION OF A SWEDISH SONG.

WHEN Winter drives his flock abroad
And fleeces all the vale,
We bar the door, it is so chill—
So chill in Aladale.

When Spring sails in her merchantmen,
Full-loaded to the rail
With flower and leaf, it is so green—
So green in Aladale.

When Summer builds a cloudy tower,
And corn is golden-pale,
We bind the harvest-sheaves with joy—
With joy in Aladale !

When Autumn rains our apples down
And sings a wild sea-tale,
Thou with the swallows must depart—
Far, far from Aladale !

THE NORTH-EAST PASSAGE.

NORDENSKIÖLD—1878-80.

WELL done, old Norseman ! When the polar star
 Beckoned thee to her ice-encircled home,
Thou didst not wait ; but, lifting sail and spar,
 Flew with the summer wind across the foam.
—The breakers' boom pursues thee—heed it not !
 They sweep across thy prow—'tis but in play.
Heed not that in some wave-lamented spot
 The bones of many a good ship waste away,
From out the mist there sounds a ghostly call—
Stop all our ears ! 'Tis but the avalanche fall !

And on they steamed, passed the great Northern Cape,
 By all his chiding thunders undismayed,
Where fits of sunshine light his frowning shape ;
 And saw grey Norway's cliffs behind them fade.
On—like the Indian hunter tracking game ;
 On—past the lonely Nova-Zemblian coast ;
Past wild spray-sheeted capes without a name,
 And low Siberian hills, a dreary host.
On, past the never-ending Asian shore,
No turning now ! Their hand is on the door.

But winter, hiding just within the end,

Flung o'er the ship a cobweb light and fine,—

Saying 'Stay—for I fain would talk with thee, my friend !

Sit in my house, and drink mine ancient wine !'

And fast ensnared within that frosty net,

Nine months they wearied of the sleeted sky ;

Till July, with her raiment dripping wet,

Stole the white key, and signed to them to fly.

So out they slipped, and passed the Arctic gates,

First western wayfarers through Behring's Straits.

K N O W L E D G E.

How anxiously we peer into the dark,
 Guessing the landscape, as we run by night.
Our torches cast a wild and flaring spark,
 They make a darkness of our very light.

THE ROSE TO THE BUTTERFLY.

COME hither, fair neighbour, I pray,
For a moment descend at my side,
And talk of the news of the day,
As we float in the sweet summertide.

Here where the cypress tree grows,
Forever grows darker and grander,
Here where the pomegranate blows,
Heliotrope, rose, oleander.

Does not the midsummer wind
Breathe on us her balmiest sigh,
And from the dark forest unbind
Sweet odours and melody?

My sisters may dance in the light,
In gladness may blossom and fall,
But my lady will choose me to-night
As she dresses her hair for the ball.

To the voice of the sweet violin
We shall glide through the lamp-lighted room,
And when dawning brings new roses in,
My life shall depart in perfume.

A WINTER PIECE.

WHEN on the mountains of Mora the far-driven snow-
storm

Sows over hillside and valley its measureless burden,
White are the peaks as the sunlighted houses of angels ;
Casting a shadow for leagues on the deep-drifted
meadows,
By hollows and gulfs of ærial purple divided.

And far at their feet lies the greensward, a smooth flow
ing river
Of field and of pasture that sweeps to the capes of the
forest,
And sometimes a sail on the glittering acres of ocean ;
And sometimes a homestead, with stacks brown as loaves
from the oven ;
And sometimes the arrow of smoke overshot by the
engine
Fast flying from shadow to shine on the sheep-dotted
valley,
Will tell of the children of men in their sheltering Low-
lands.

But ah ! if a wind should arise, and, in indolent whispers,
Speak of the tropical skies, and the swirl of the ocean ;

Of leaves never falling in lands of unchangeable summer ;
And palm-trees that sing like the sails of a ship ; and the
perfume

That steals in the dark from the disc of the night-blowing
cerens,—

Then something stirs in the snow, something breaks in
the marble,

Something bids it forsake these cold ridges and peaks
everlasting,

And plunging from cliff to crag, 'mid the shriek of the
echoes,

It thunders along the ravine till it sinks in the river.

A N S W E R S.

PRAYERS are the seeds we sow in tears or gladness,

We go forth weeping, bearing precious seed ;

But when we see the sheaves that we have planted,

We gaze in wonder on the heavenly mead.

These shocks, these fadeless flowers, are given indeed ;

They are the harvests of our earthly sadness.

The stars, the rain, the suns beside us plead.

Our prayers are answered, though they seem not
granted,

And Love gives larger than our utmost need.

AFTER MUSIC.

SHE sang when the fire was low,
And the rain passed on with a humming tread,
Like bees that swarm when the bean-flowers blow,
And the wind-flower droops its head.

She sang of the drifting cloud,
And the tremulous firelight filled the room,
And a blast from the sea-wood cried aloud,
Then died away in the gloom.

She sang of the tropical day
That broods over beautiful island and plain,
Of the breakers that fling out their white wings of spray,
Then fold and spread them again.

And still while she sang we heard
Far off, over forest and fern-clad steep,
The murmuring ocean, sorrow-stirred,
That even sobs in its sleep.

THE VOICE FROM ABOVE.

IMPRISONED in this 'darksome house of day,'
We blindly feel along our prison walls,
Seeking some sign that this swift-passing day
May yet expand to everlasting halls.

Then, if from unseen heights of blue above,
Descends the ringing warble of a bird,
Telling of life and sunshine, happy love,—
Oh with what rapture is that music heard !

It brings no witness to our narrow roof,
No angel smites the iron-guarded portal ;
Itself the sign from heaven, itself the proof,
The hostage and the bond of life immortal.

A H O P E.

THE day was passing in a stillness deep,
When not the lightest air would lift its wing,
And Winter seemed to turn in his white, dream-haunted
sleep,
Half wakened by the coming steps of Spring.

A pallid sky, unwarmed by sunset's glow,
Fold after fold of rippling cloud outspread,
And sent from the reddening west, the lazy caw of the
crow
Seemed sinking into the stillness overhead.

And an inarticulate whisper far away
Rolled from the woods, and met the whispering main,—
So strange it seems to me to live to-day,
I cannot think it strange to live again.

THE DREAMER.

ONCE in a busy street
A beggar stood, sad, alone ;
He made no complaint, nor muttered
Request nor moan.

When silently passing, one
Threw an alms gift there ;
As he gazed, to a speechless joy
Changed despair.

What was this treasure-gift ?
This pearl of living ?
What woke this sad soul to bliss ?
The gift of giving.

THE FORTY-MILE BUSH.

FAR through the forest's aromatic glade
We rode one afternoon of golden ease.
The long road ran through sunshine and through shade,
Lulled by the somnolent stories of the trees.

Sometimes a bell-bird fluted far away ;
Sometimes the murmur of the leafy deep,
Rising and falling through the autumnal day,
Sang louder on the hills, then sank to sleep.

Before us stretched the pine trees' sombre miles,
Soft lay the moss, like furs upon the floor.
Behind, the woodland's green monotonous aisles,
Closed far away by sunset's amber door.

League after league the same. The sky grew red,
And through the trees appeared a snowy gleam
Of lonely peak and spectral mountain-head,
And gulfs that nurse the glacier and the stream.

Deep in the glen, the merry waters racing
Sent forth their turbulent voices to the night.
The stars above began their solemn pacing,
And home-like shone the distant village light.

Mysterious forest ! In this humming city
I seem to hear thy music-breathing tree,
Thy branches wave and beckon me in pity,
To seek again thy hospitality !

IN A GARDEN—VICTORIA.

I.

THE Elm has caught the torch of Spring
And passed it to the lime,
The hedgerow waits, a thorny ring,
Brown as in winter time.
And bare, beside the almond tree,
My vine-wrought citadel,
Where Summer globes, for you and me,
Her amber muscatel.
Each flask an essence of the sun
Sealed in a secret grot—
And here she reddens, one by one,
The tan-checked apricot.

II.

Hark ! from yon wattle's golden-fretted shade
Come clear familiar notes of music ringing,
Some old bird-ballad of an English glade,
That Time himself can scarce remember bringing.
And now in liquid syllables above,
The mocking songster of our wood replies,
Then listens ; while the pine trees softly move,
Breathing a low accompaniment of sighs.
Hid in this leafy cloister let us wait,
And hear what news the travelling winds relate.

III.

Sweet missel thrush, what loving exile's hand
Hath brought thee over half a sphere of seas
To wake the memories of a greener land
With that brave morning-voice among the trees?
Slipped from the cage, a truant frank and bold,
Thou seekest a home in leafage never bare,
Our Danæe tree that blooms in rain of gold,
And feeds with honeyed perfume all the air—
Here mayest thou find a mate, and rest and build,
Grand master of thy wild and warbling guild.

IV.

But yet I love our pied musician best.
Such tunes, perhaps, were heard when Morning drew
His bow, and struck on Memnon's stony breast,
Under old Egypt's rain-forsaken blue.
Hear him at dawn ; he tells his thoughts aloud :
Or in our silent evenings, dry and cool,
When rosy footprints of the flying cloud
Still sparkle from the shallow forest-pool.
And where the sunset leaves of light were shed,
One planet hangs its golden seed instead.

A LULLABY.

‘MOTHER, hear ! the drums are beating,
Are there soldiers on the shore,
Tramping on, and then retreating,
While the distant cannons roar ?’

‘No, no, my dear, you only hear
The breakers calling to the moon ;
'Tis only the wind, half awake, half asleep,
Singing a wild and fitful tune.

‘The moon is dreaming, almost seeming
To smile in her sleep on the quiet skies ;
The stars can hardly keep from shutting
Their ever-watchful, sparkling eyes.

‘The nest on the bough is waving now,
But the nestlings sleep in their downy cell ;
The butterfly folds up his wings of snow,
And swings in the satin-hung lily-bell.

‘Sleep then, my dear, and while you hear
The drowsy music of the shore,
Dream of the foam-clad fairies dancing
Hand-in-hand on its gleaming floor.’

M I R A C L E S.

HALF of our nature lies beneath the deep ;
And sometimes, as we measure out the fields,
There comes a murmur from the rooted hills.
A tremor shakes our island to its heart,
And strikes us dumb ; and all the flowery land
Looks strange ; and pale the autumnal-golden sun.

FROM HEINE.

I.

WITH myrtle and roses,
Perfumed and cold,
With weeping laburnum
And marigold,
I will garland this book
Like some holy shrine,
And wrap in its shroud
These sad songs of mine.
Oh, if Love, too, could sleep in its funeral fold !

II.

This sunshiny summer morning
The trees by the south wind are stirred,
The roses are whispering together ;
I only have never a word.
The roses are nodding and whispering,
'O Love ! Let us love while we may,
Reproach not our sister, our darling,
Though lonely she leaves us to-day.'

L' A M O U R.

[*Translation from the French of Boufflers (1775).*]

‘LOOK not on love ; he is a fair deceiver,’—
This is my mother’s counsel day by day,—
‘He cheats the hopes of every fond believer,
He smiles and kisses, only to betray.’
Can this be true ? He seems so sweet a child,
I fear, by scandal, mother is beguiled.

Parents are wise, and I am young and stupid,
But *I* have heard Lucas and Josephine
Speak of some charming friend—sweet rosy Cupid ;
They sing his praises with a happy mien.
Would you believe it ? ’Tis precisely he
That mother looks on so suspiciously.

How solve the riddle ? For the case is serious ;
I think that I must seek this God of Love ;
Colin will help me in the quest mysterious ;
What harm *could* happen to us as we rove ?
And even if Love should roguish prove and wild,
We are so tall—and two against a child !

FAIRYLAND.

Do you remember that careless band,
Riding o'er meadow and wet sea-sand,
 One autumn day, in a mist of sunshine,
Joyously seeking for fairyland?

The wind in the tree-tops was scarcely heard,
The streamlet repeated its one silver word,
 And far away, o'er the depths of woodland,
Floated the bell of the parson-bird.

Pale hoar-frost glittered in shady slips,
Where ferns were dipping their finger-tips,
 From mossy branches a faint perfume
Breathed over honeyed clematis lips.

At last we climbed to the ridge on high
Ah, crystal vision ! Dreamland nigh !
 Far, far below us, the wide Pacific
Slumbered in azure from sky to sky.

And cloud and shadow, across the deep
Wavered, or paused in enchanted sleep,
 And eastward, the purple-misted islets
Fretted the wave with terrace and steep.

We looked on the tranquil, glassy bay,
On headlands sheeted with dazzling spray,
And the whitening ribs of a wreck forlorn
That for twenty years had wasted away.

All was so calm, and pure, and fair,
It seemed the hour of worship there,—
Silent, as where the great North Minster
Rises for ever, a visible prayer.

Then we turned from the murmurous forest-land,
And rode over shingle and silver sand,
For so fair was the earth in the golden autumn,
We sought no farther for Fairyland.

THE SAILOR'S DREAM OF HOME.

I.

OH, if I once could see the brown moorland
Where by my father's side I used to play,
Or hear the thunder of that northern strand,
Whose ceaseless merriment tempted me away.

Are the boys asleep in the quiet house,
Where the pasture creeps to the sandy cove?
So soundly they sleep that no storm can rouse
Their heads from the pillow where white dreams rove.

'Tis a windy place, and the poplar trees,
And the pines are twisted and bent by the blast,
When it shouts from the wold like the sweep of seas,
And strains at the door that is bolted fast.

'Tis not daylight yet, but the master turns,
And fears lest his harvest, poor wheat, be laid.
Through the casement the red star of autumn burns,
And in pale streamers flutters the ivy braid.

And the mother caresses her baby's head—
'Lie still, little robber, the day is not near.'
Like a nestling affrighted, he curls in his bed,
While the red cock raises his faithful cheer.

And our ship drives on like a silent ghost
Just at cockcrow too, for I hear his patrol ;
Oh, what is the name of this fading coast,
And whose are the voices I heard, O Soul ?

II.

When I was a child I used to fear the stars,
Those ancient presences, so white and cold.
But now, to-night, they seem, thro' cloudy bars,
Pleadingly looking on our dusky fold.

In all their pilgrimage, their starry strife,
They have seen nothing fairer, more divine,
Than this low hearth where burns the spark of life,
This flower-strewed barrow where we fret and pine.

Here, where the trembling note of mother-bird
And broken words of human love are heard ;
And all our knowledge comes to this.—Some day
A messenger will touch us from the deep,
And, softer than a mother's voice, will say,
'It is not morning yet. Sleep, gently sleep.'

A BOOK OF SKETCHES.

A Book of Sketches.



ESTHER'S HOME.

A PLEASANT place, half country and half town.

A nook of England under happier skies,
With whiter peaks to circle field and down,
And darker forests' wilder harmonies.

High overhead, the sky, in azure bloom,
Opens a calyx of unclouded light ;
How green the turf is in this forest-room,
With dust of English daisies powdered white.

The rivulet, twittering under roofs of fern,
Has caught our English tune ; and far above
The skylarks, with a joy we cannot learn, —
Repeat the same millennial song of love.

And here's the house ; five fir trees stand aloof ;
It hides in ivy over head and ears ;
A flock of roses 'lights upon the roof,
And honeysuckle round the chimney peers.

F I S H I N G.

A DOWNY-BREASTED sky, a muffled sun,
A polished sea, blue as the hyacinth spray
When spring winds smooth its buds out, one by one,
And lift the winging swallow on her way.
There's not a crease on all the azure sheet,
No rounding breaker stirs the seaweed hair,
Even the thistle-down's adventurous fleet
Would fear to launch upon the dozing air.
And lulled by tides that scarcely lift her prow,
Our boat sits like a nest on summer bough.

And near me, all in summer-white arrayed,
The delicate fabric of an Indian loom
(Threaded by dusky fingers, in the shade
Of tropic branches' scarlet-shaken bloom),—
My lady dreams ; her fingers hardly feel
The line that slackens on the idle reel,
Where waves of quivering network, veined with light,
Are greener than the woods in summer height,
Whose fringe of foam that flutters on the sand,
Is white as daisy milk on pasture-land.
Whose song is softer than the tales of sleep,
The immeasurable language of the deep.

A face of sunshine and a brow of shade !

Brown eyes that seem to question and entreat,
Hair, half of gold and half of hazel made,

An accent like the streamlet, wild and sweet.
Are these the tokens of as fair a mind ?

The manifest and expression of the soul ?
Or are they but a portrait, mutely kind,

Unanswering beauty of the painter's scroll ?
I cannot guess ; but sweet it is to glide,
Dreaming beside her, on this dreaming tide.

But now the very clouds are standing still ;
The sea-gulls scream and balance in the strait,
And flash above the purple-pillared hill

That guards our harbour's narrow rocky gate.
And there the iron-shod ocean messenger,

Over the shadowy meadows of the bay
Slips like a stag ; and from her forehead clear

As hawthorn blossoms in an English May,
Scatters the spinning fountains of the spray.

We must go home ; the wave sings drowsily,
If I should speak, what would her answer be ?

QUESTIONS.

I HAVE spoken, though half in doubt ;
But longer I would not wait ;
She has answered ; how strange it seemed
To hear her prescribe my fate.

Friends ! We are friends, she says,
But farther,—she hardly knows,—
To-day the moon-daisies are white,
Let us wait till the almond blows.

She sat there so calm and serene,
The red hardly stirred in her cheek ;
I was angry, and felt like a fool,
While she could so calmly speak.

Yet we walked by the wreck on the shore,
Where the weeds creep on cabin and rafter ;
While the water flowed in with the tide,
Half sobbing, and half in laughter.

THROUGH THE WOODS.

Esther.—I AM going to church through the woods. It is
Catherine's Eve.

Eliot.—I will walk with you there, and will wait till your
service is done.

I am a doubter, you know. 'Tis the mould of the age.
I fear we are children of Thomas the doubter, to-day.

Esther.—Yet Thomas was still an Apostle, and one of the
saints,

And blessed are they who have not seen and yet have
believed.

Eliot.—Alas! we are all too unworthy! but yet, in our
hearts

Something cleaves, were it only the hymns and the prayers
of the past. . . .

As you see in this oak-tree, fast-locked in the thick
folded wood,

The nail that a child's hand has driven in when it was
green.

But speak of your childhood to me. Was your home
always here?

Esther.—When I was a child I remember we lived on a
hill

In the far-off Australian landscape, not here in the
green.

How high was the sky in those days ! The wide plain
at our feet
Stretched out like the sea, and the long, long horizon
unbound,
Seemed to faint in mirage, like the smoke of a surf-
beaten shore.
From my window high up in the roof I could look out
for leagues
O'er the great plains unploughed, white and sere in the
midsummer heats,
Not dipped in green leaves, like your England in ripen-
ing June.
. . . . There was only one track ; it went wander-
ing round and about
Till it climbed on a ridge of the hills, and went over the
spur.
To my fancy it seemed like the road that the pilgrims
of old,
Good Christian, and Hopeful, climbed on to the heavenly
land.
How often I looked, half in hope, that the 'Three Shining
Ones
Would walk there in light ; but they never came over the
hills. . . .
Some days I would see on the road the slow yoke-laden
steers
Dragging patiently on in the dust-cloud their burden of
wool
From the far-inland desert ; and sometimes at dusk on
the pass
Their camp-fires shone friendly, like lighthouses over
the plain.

I never can bear now to look at the cherry in Spring,
When her boughs are down-pressed by the weight of her
bee-haunted snow.

For when the bloom whitens I feel my first sorrow again—
That first pain, so strange and so keen ; when he left me
alone,

My brother, my playmate, my friend, in the blossoming
Spring ;

The Three Shining Ones came in the midnight and led
him away.

But I looked for the watch-fires and dreamed—though
I knew it was vain—

He might send me a word ; or perhaps in that house on
the pass,

Where the ringlet of smoke used to rise on the grey
granite wall,

I might find the Interpreter's house, and would play
with him there. . . .

But here is the church,—do not wait,—I will walk home
alone.

A T H O M E.

HIGH in her little rose-clad room
 Niched in the winding stair,
My lady sits and looks abroad
 On the wind's thoroughfare.

The roof is tined with cedar wood,
 The panels golden pine,
The lattice set with lozenges,
 And hung with crimson fine.

The pear-tree wraps her oriel ;
 Musk fills the window frame ;
Her paroquet sits in the ring,
 And twitters out her name.

The circling landscape underneath
 Glow through its misty veil ;
The thunder-cloud against the wind
 Beats up, a blackening sail.

The sea, that shone like silver scales,
 Fades, tarnished by its breath ;
The shaking poplar turns her face
 As in a wind of death.

Still half the fields return the sun,
Still laughs the running wheat :
The bird sings on,—one sheet of flame !
And now the thunders meet.

But up within the turret-room
How still it is, how warm !
Shut, like the water-lily's cup
That closes in the storm.

A kitten coiled upon the chair,
A half-wrought broidery,
Books on the wall—and passing dreams,
Perchance a dream of me !

You hear no knock, no creaking door,
No foot upon the stair,
But love has stolen the key of thought,
Before you know he's there.

THE MINIATURE.

SILENT she sits, a picture in her hand
She seems to question with regretful gaze :
It is herself, a wild and happy child,
With flying hair, and innocent, smiling eyes ;
Her arms and neck with wreaths of daisies bound.

And as she looks and looks, with mingled joy and pain,
She seems to breathe the morning air of life again ;
Wild playmate of the sun and wind ! The favourite of
the Spring !
Gay rebel of the little school ! Chief of the rose-cheeked
ring !
Where are those merry games and toys ? What has be-
come of thee ?
And who this stranger in thy place, who looks so wist-
fully
Into those eyes as though she fain would hear her fortune
told ?
Ah, little gipsy ! not even though we crossed thy hand
with gold !

ESTHER'S SONG (1).

THREE gay companions cheered me on my way,
Once in the morning of a flowery day,
With song, and dance, and merry madrigal.

One pledged me in the enchanted wine of love ;
One like a music-making wind would move,
And one sang sweeter than the nightingale.

Youth was the first to tire and lag behind ;
His winged sandals slipped, nor could he find
Ever again the path to follow me.

Hope grew more silent now his friend had fled ;
At last he stopped, and pressed my hand, and said,—
' Farewell ! I'll meet thee at the Trysting-tree !'

So on we went, with neither dance nor song ;
But with Love near, the way was never long,
And distant music floated through the field.

Ah, what is this ? Has Love forsaken me ?
Where have I seen this heath—this stricken tree ?—
This river that glides slow and mournfully,
And this great angel leaning on his sword ?

My friends were gone. There was no helper nigh,
The angel raised his visor at my cry.
I feared to see the face of Death ;—but he
Smiled, and I saw Love waiting there for me.

THE LITTLE RIFT.

WE sat together on the old stone pier
Talking of songs, and books that we had read ;
And then we quarrelled ; how, I hardly know—
What have I done to make this bright day dim ?

We looked upon the dreaming summer-land
That rose above our harbour's azure bow.
A band of billowing woodland, dark and low,
Flowed to the east ; and over it the cloud,
Broad and thick-folded, closed above the land,
Close as the hazel-husk enfolds the nut.
A far-off shaft of sunshine, striking fire,
Showed distant fields we never saw before—
That belt of stubble field—that flashing pane,
How near they seemed in the strange sunset gleam !

We talked of old-world memoirs, in whose wit
We drink the sealed-up sunshine of the age ;
Of travellers' tales whose wild adventure stirs
The salt sea-faring spark within our blood ;
We paid our duty to the delicate art,
Of those who paint our huts and palaces
With frescoes of the endless lover's tale.
More bright than in Egyptian temple-tombs
Starts out the life of twice a thousand years ;

Of poets, whose mysterious melody,
Frailest and longest-lived of earthly things,
Still sings above the forward-blowing wind,
A living voice when pyramids are dust,—
We spoke in love ; but then we first fell out ;
She was all for the new ; I loved the old—
Those green and moss-grown alleys of the past,
Where sinks the still light thro' the silent glade,
And statues wait, half-blinded by the leaves,
Listening for footfalls that will never come.

She would not hear great Milton's organ roll,
Nor walk with Spencer by the liliated shore—
But we made peace beside the Laureate's song,
And then we read his dream of beauties dead,
And as she smiled, I spoke of one to-day,—
Blonde Clytie, with the graceful statue-head,
The smile that wakes like sparkles on still seas ;
The lute-string voice ; but Esther there arose,
Saying she was weary of the waves' dull song,
She must go home. Her eyes were dark and proud,
She would not even let me walk with her.
Now what has vexed her ? For I cannot tell.
There is a foolish song I used to hear—

' Fair women are strange at the best,
And the best are the strangest, it seems ;
You must wait till their mood passes by,
Good-night then, dear lady, sweet dreams !'

W E D N E S D A Y.

COME, let's be friends. This day of bliss
Was surely meant for happy eyes.
Or sign, at least, an armistice
Till quarrelling winds arise.

On this green headland we will stay
Till day has spent his golden hoard ;
See the cloud-shadows on the Bay
Mark out a chequer-board.

These ships shall be our playing men ;
Mine is the schooner, calm-bestead ;
Yours is the brig that tacks in vain
To clear the Burning Head.

Mine, mine has won ! She fills, she soars,
She sails into the azure day ;
A wild wind shakes the mountain doors,
And sweeps our board away !

ESTHER'S SONG (2).

I KNOW a place where rows of giant pines
By nature's hand were planted long ago ;
Their ruddy boles in long unbroken lines
Scenting with sandal-wood the path below.

Sometimes the long light spangles all the glade,
And gilds the turf with tremulous filigrees—
Sunshine entangled in a net of shade—
That moves with every movement of the trees.

Three centuries, in these dim, cloistered lines,
They have stood waiting on the forest floor ;
Their branches hung with rigging of dead vines,
Like ships deserted on a weary shore.

The blinded light, the verdurous atmosphere,
The ever-wandering whisper of the breeze,
Will solace me. My footsteps almost fear
To break this endless Sabbath of the trees.

Give me your counsel, melancholy friends !
Bend, bend your branches over me and hear !
Show me the bourne to which my pathway tends,
And lend me something of your solemn cheer.

You answer not ; but through your endless sigh,
Far off I hear the lonely bell-bird fret.
I know the secret he would fain deny—
Love's hope and inexpressible regret.

T H E M I R R O R.

Esther.--JUST let me see the primrose gown—
I think I like its colour best ;
That lace, too—ancient Point d’Espagne—
Is worth twice all the rest.

These ruffles once danced with a Queen
A minuet in an oaken hall ;
This sleeve once trembled on the hand
Of haughty cardinal.

The convent walls of Philip’s Spain,
The gentle nuns, the sunburnt day,
The secret, even of its make,
All, all are passed away.

While this foam breath outlives,—but still
I wonder if my blue will fit
Such colour ! Turquoise set in pearl
Alone would go with it.

I know he likes this old brocade ;
Pale cowslips trim its pictured stuff ;
The satin hardly suits my hair,
My arm’s not fair enough.

Lucy will wear her russet gown,
And Rosamond loves the rose's hue ;
And Magdalen says, ' The girl's a fool
Who would not choose the new.'

Which shall it be ?—For one so brown,
I fear the tabinet is too bright—
The oldest always suits me best,
I'll wear it for to-night.

Now quick—my painted Watteau fan,
And bring my Spanish gloves, Nanette—
See that my shoes are not awry—
One wants a new rosette.

Now wave my hair,—a little higher
And put the yellow aigrette in,
One rose perhaps ?—no, no, not one,
Give me that diamond pin.

Ready at last ! How pale I look !
Now tell me, children, will I do ?
I fear this silk is faded quite—
I wish I'd worn the blue.

•

O U T O F D O O R S.

Eliot.—HERE on the slope of this brown mountain side,
That turns, like some great beast, towards the west.
His coat, those long-haired grasses, dry and wan,
His mane a tuft of shaggy, stunted trees,—
I will see out the day. Come, Rollo, come !
There should be snipe in these high withered swamps,
And with a gun, no man is quite a fool.

Not for the world would I have vexed my friend,
But something in our web has gone awry. . . .
I think I know the meaning of this change ;
What brings fair Clytie to our quiet shores ?
A widow now,—rich, lovely, free as air,—
Has she no men left in her London world
That she must steer her yacht to Heron Bay ?
Poor sport here, truly. What, then, does she seek ?

The same white outline, carved as if in stone ;
Bright waves of hair that mock the statue's mould ;
Eyes, lifting with the sweep of brown bird's wing ;
A dimple—copied from an Angel's head
That, set on high in some Cathedral gloom,
Bends on the changing centuries of men,
It's changeless, sweet, expressionless repose ;

I know them all by heart ! I ought to know !
Once, years ago, I thought my life was spoilt
Because she left me for a richer prey.
Now I am grateful : for she taught me much.

Yesterday, when the sky was white as milk,
And all the sea-paths set with mother o' pearl,
Pale in the afternoon's midsummer heat,
I rowed her to the heron-haunted cove.
Pleasant it was to feel the doubting air
Whisper, and move, and then alight again ;
And pleasant, too, to hear of other days :
To ask, ' They have not all forgotten me ;
There still remains a kinsman or a friend
Who holds me dearer for my father's sake ?'
While thus we talked, we passed the ruddy cliffs,
And saw the herons in their fishing-pool.
The bare-legged, happy boys upon the beach
Sent shrilly messages along the calm ;
The water changed, like necks of humming birds,
Shooting from green to gold, from blue to grey.
The fisher-sails hung motionless at sea,
And whiter gulls poised silently above.

Here, resting on the oars, I let my thoughts
Slip down the long remembrance of our youth, . . .
As one who sinks in sleep's deep dusky wave,
While shadowy dreams play round him, so was I.

Once more I stood within a garden dim,
With square-cut mazes, alleys trim and green ;
There was no sun ; the sky was softly grey
And underneath the green of centuries

Thrice-folded in the garden's leafy close.
A ridge of moorland showed above the wall ;
The east wind blew (tho' June's door stood ajar),
And swept the tulips into twinkling waves ;
Lifted the lids of hidden spicy stores,
Shook out the pitchers of the honey-vine,
And disarrayed the prim carnation beds.
The old grey house—a wall of braided bloom,
A girl's scarf flitting thro' the linden shade—
This bunch of lilacs, plucked within the hour,
And the same voice and presence there as now.
Was it all a dream, or am I now awake ?
Sometimes she spoke of little trifling things
Long past ; and asked me had I quite forgot ?
With half a sigh,—I answered cheerfully.

It may be that the Baroness finds it dull
At times, perhaps, even in her palmiest days ;
We cannot always summon joy at will—
He is a rover ; wild as any hawk,
And will not live, the song-bird of the breast,
Save where it pleases him to stoop and build.
Bright-wingèd traveller of a fairer sky !—
Perhaps she thinks that old-world comedy
That once we played might serve to pass the hour :
We have rehearsed it well ! It should be smooth—
But not the same !—once is enough for me.

Now, Esther, let this dark thought pass away
That floats between us, like a grasping cloud ;
Trust me, I seek no other eyes but yours.

Far from the coast, and hidden misty capes,
As night draws on I hear a gathering sound.

It is the ground-swell of the southern deep,
Rebounding from our iron-fronted shores.
High answer to the Antarctic breakers' call.
There has been wild work on the seas last night,
And will be more, to break this leaden calm ;
There stings a raindrop, like a signal shot.
Come, Rollo, we must find a homeward path
Down this high shoulder of the bending hill,
Whose seaward-slanting Bush of mounded green,
Shaped by the strong South-Easter's keenest scythe,
Will give us shelter from his coming blast.

PARTING.

Esther.—I THINK the time has come that we must part.

I do not blame you, but I could not bear

To parley with another for your heart,

Or be contented with a smaller share.

No, no,—go to her,—love her—as you will.

(Alas for me, if I must love you still !)

I do not blame you. Doubtless she is fair—

(For her age, too !)—your taste is like a man's ;

Her eyes have something of a vacant stare,

But that may suit her well-considered plans ;

I heard men say—‘ Just made for love.’ Ah, well,

Those that are made to love have no such spell.

But not for all her beauty nor her art ;

No, not for even the love she takes from you,

Would I exchange my solitary part

For hers ; whose skies may seem for ever blue ;

Rather I'd keep my soul (tho' but in pain)

Than own a life so empty, cold, and vain.

Now once again, now once for all, farewell !

Never again on earth I'll take your hand ;

How many a Spring like this will green the dell ;

But we shall never more in friendship stand ;

But do not grieve for freedom—who can tell—

Life is not over yet—farewell—farewell !

CONCLUDED.

Eliot.—FAREWELL then to a heart that cannot trust !

Farewell to one who for a moment's blame
Severs me from her love with thoughts unjust ;
Far better so—we could not be the same.

Once (as I thought) I had a gentle friend,
Her eyes were ever full of mirthful speech ;
I dreamed she would be faithful to the end ;
Love's lesson, surely, she was made to teach.

But she is changed, and I must leave the place
Where some few happy hours were given away ;
Now for the last I look upon your face—
Was it the wind?—or did you whisper—‘ Stay !’

THE SOUL AND NATURE.

‘ Whose is this image and superscription ? ’

I.

WHEN I consider the heavens, the glorious spheres
 Knit by the ever-circling threads of light,
Like beads upon the morning gossamers,
 That float and glisten in the web of night—
From those far lands a whisper seems to rise,
Like whispers in a forest land of sighs—
 O son of man ! In nature’s boundless sway.

What is thy feeble, passing spark of day ?—
A leaf that falls at breath of icy wind ;
 A wave that lifts, and pauses on the shore ;
A bird that, singing, flies from clouds behind,
 And, silent, falls in deeper clouds before.

II.

Not so ; though dust we are, to dust is given
 Gems from a king, more prized than moon or star ;
He gave the eye, to hold the span of heaven ;
 Thoughts to contain the rising worlds afar,
And from our homely planet’s school we rise,
To read the shining letters of the skies.

These stars above that tread their ceaseless measure,
The blossom at our feet that sucks the ground,
The stream of life that runs though pain and pleasure,
By one deep law of harmony are bound.

III.

Strange fate is ours ! A spirit must remember ;
We seize the past, we breathe its faded day,
Like travellers in some ancient, painted chamber,
We gaze on hours that long have passed away ;
And man, who speaks o'er continent and sea ;
Whose words outlive the ages past, outstrip the years to be ;
Who, ere the starry centuries have run,
Marks the swift comet, or the shadowing sun,
Yet knows not whence he comes, or whither goes ;
King for a day—a beggar at its close.

IV.

Just at the turn of night I heard the seas
And woke ; the golden-fronted caravan
Led by Orion's glittering scimitar,
The beckoning cross, the wreathed Pleiades,
The bright procession of an unknown plan
Paced on the hill of heaven, star after star.
What bourne seek ye, with solemn steps and slow ?
Whence do ye come ? O whither do you go ?

V.

Jupiter hung on the moon, near the western lawn,
Piloting in her silver-sailed ship
Low in the sky ; but in the pallid East,
Like some bright spirit that walks before the dawn,

June's planet rose above the wooded slip,
And slowly there the breath of day increased.
You seemed to hear the whisper of the light
Rising above the sunken bar of night.

FINIS.

D. : V. : 7'89.

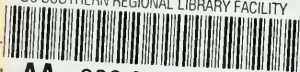
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